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ABSTRACT

This paper briefly describes the effects of changes instituted by new library administrators and discusses the roles of both upper and middle level library managers in the process of adapting to change. Suggestions based on the experience of the authors as new middle level managers at a time when extensive changes were occurring in a university library are presented in the following areas: (1) vision--an understanding of where the organization is and where it should be going; (2) change and innovation--possibly including reorganization, automation, and expansion; (3) staff response to change; (4) slack resources--time, equipment, and personnel available in times of stress; (5) power and the exercise of authority by new administrators; (6) stress caused by the addition of new tasks, and the mutation of familiar regimens to new and more complex sets of functions; (7) organizational culture--the history and circumstances of the organization and management positions; (8) trust and communication; and (9) team building. (14 references) (MES)

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KEY WORDS FOR NEW MANAGERS

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KEY WORDS FOR NEW MANAGERS

In September, 1985 the Orradre Library began a new era. After nearly 20 years, our long-time University Librarian retired and his successor arrived on campus. The staff was aware that life was about to alter, but none of us could imagine the amount, speed, or depth of the changes to come.

In reviewing the past two and a half years, we have attempted to analyze our changing situation and to explore the adjustments as they relate to us as new managers. Our role, we have discovered, is complex. We must set a new order in motion without causing undue stress or creating morale problems. We need to establish priorities and motivate people, and maintain continuity with the past. We are expected to establish positive communication and trust with staff, while standing apart to look at issues more globally. We need to control situations at the same time we attempt to gain wider support both within the library and in the broader community. This formidable set of

conflicting expectations has been attempted in an environment that also includes chronic understaffing and the impact of automation, issues that frequently cause dramatic tension.

Our research in both Library and Management literature suggests that successful management contains many of these elements. However, inadequate attention has been paid to the differences between new managers with unaccustomed status (and possibly, but not inherently, the power to act), and those who have had authority, but must exercise it in new places and with different people. We have based this essay on our experiences as new middle managers. Rather than merely repeat it, however, we have extrapolated from it. In doing so we hope to shed light on some universal questions and ask how they can or should be dealt with in environments similar to our own.

Because we have been at the center of a large change, we should define some terms we have used in our discussion. We Define the Top Manager as the Director of the Library, the Administrative leader of the organization. The Management Team includes this person and the middle managers, the Administrator's direct

subordinates. Finally, the Middle Manager is the person with the responsibility for day-to-day operations, rather than line supervisory staff.

I. VISION

We have called the first concept on our list "Vision". It refers to the leader's understanding of where the organization is and where it should be going. By extension, it includes implementation of the means the library will use in order to achieve the desired goals.

The top manager should know where the library ought to be at a given time. The ability to articulate and develop that understanding and get people to accept and join it is another matter. Ideally, there will be agreement among the library staff, the management team, and the higher administration (University, city, company), regarding the vision and their roles in it. A lack of co-operation, as we will demonstrate, has serious consequences. If the staff is prepared to move in one direction, the resources to make change must be forthcoming. On the other side, the staff must take careful note of information coming from

the leadership and blend it with the new vision to conform with the needs of the library's future as it is seen by the top manager. We have been fortunate over the past two years in increasing our staff by 2.5 F.T.E. during a University budget consolidation and position review.

As middle managers, our primary role is to support and promote the vision being put forth. We then need to communicate it down to line staff and supervisors, and generate enthusiasm for it, while maintaining a smooth workflow. At the same time we must transmit information up the organizational ladder, in order to gain needed support (financial, staffing, equipment, etc.) from above to implement the vision. Because we came to management from line supervision, however, we were linked to the staff and therefore found it difficult to gain support from those who were recently our peers, who felt we should push their agendas. As managers, we have at times felt that our duties have been onerous, as we try to mediate between the vision we believe in and the people who have worked with us.

If the library lacks cohesion between these levels, or if there is disunity, the vision may be doomed. Only with a clearly articulated set of goals agreed upon by the various elements and levels of the library, can success be achieved.

II. CHANGE AND INNOVATION

There are many different types of adjustments that institutions must work through, and it seems to us that we have been through almost all of them in the past 30 months.

Under the old system we were heads of "Departments", two group leaders running semi-autonomous elements of the operation. In April, 1986 we became Middle managers in an entirely new structure. This reorganization created three "Divisions", promoted staff members to lead them, and rearranged many long-established working relationships. One result of the reorganization has been that Librarians on the staff are no longer involved in clerical services, and can concentrate on professional duties instead.

Another major innovation has been the introduction of computers. Three years ago we had only 3 OCLC terminals in the building. We now have at least one PC in each working unit. In 1987 we automated our monograph ordering process with three new computers in the Acquisitions Section. Most visibly for our patrons, in February, 1988 we began OCLC searching at our Reference desk. This may not be innovative for some, but for us and our colleagues it has entailed major rethinking. At the same time we have established an Automation task force, which is now putting the final touches on a Request for Proposal for an integrated automated system. This too has required dramatic adjustments in just three years.

The library formerly had very loose internal ties. Each unit did the work assigned; we only discussed our jobs on an irregular and informal basis. (Staff meetings were at best irregular, and unproductive of new ideas or information.) Under the new structure we have an Administrative Group that meets weekly to plan strategy and make policy decisions. Staff at all levels have been involved through a Library Council which has been through several transformations of both makeup and size. We have

Divisional meetings at which staff learn about and help to plan the activities they will perform. Committees have been set up to address special needs and projects. There have been several working groups on such problems as food and drink and the shelving of periodicals. Two Task Forces have made lengthy reports and recommendations.

We have also expanded beyond our walls for the first time. We are now encouraged both to make contacts and attend meetings on and off campus during working time. Our professional staff now attends several workshops throughout Northern California every month. One of us is on three California Library Association committees, and we have attended recent Online and ACRL Conferences as well as annual state and ALA meetings.

While these activities have brought many positive results, there have been difficulties as staff attempted to adjust. As we have indicated, these actions were undertaken as part of the attempt to rejuvenate a library that had practically no contemporary technology. We have seen at first hand that the transformation from set modes to a constantly active environment is extremely

traumatic. In addition, while service has expanded their responsibilities and given them a voice, staff felt at first that they were removed from "their jobs", to spend time in meetings with the committees and on the library's projects.

Given these experiences, we feel that radical change poses many threats to staid organizations. While the need may be seen from outside, people who are comfortable should be convinced of the utility, not to say requirement for innovation. Agreement ought to be gained before dramatic changes are implemented. Major shifts in activity or structure should be fully explored and options discussed prior to enactment. As with the communication of a vision, the experienced manager may have a different view of both of these than the new administrator. With broader experiences, the incoming person can make connections that escape others, while the librarian promoted to a managerial role may have institutional and personal loyalties that the new Director does not have. Which of them is correct in any given situation is a moot question; the point is that both will have good reasons. Discussion among all levels of the organization can help bring about understanding and eventual compromise.

III. Staff Response

There are many different types of people in libraries as in all work environments. Regarding the ability and readiness to accept change, however, we have found three distinct reactions by the staff in our library. The first group of people support change. These individuals may sincerely appreciate the opportunities being provided by their managers. They may also be frustrated with their past experiences, or merely able and willing to change easily from one system or set of rules to another.

Resistance to change appears to take two distinct forms. Some workers may believe that new ideas are inherently disruptive. They feel that they should be left alone to do the work they had done previously. This may result from a lack of confidence in the leadership. It can also relate to a belief that the individual has been saddled with responsibilities relinquished by other parts of the organization. Third, people are concerned that the outcome will not be to their benefit. It is clear, though, that the depth and breadth of innovation that is taking place in our library cannot be halted by such people. As in the famous railroad metaphor, they must "get aboard or get run over" by the change.

Another group of staff consists of workers who try to adjust to changes but who, for a variety of reasons, cannot do so successfully. Because many workers will be neither proponents nor opponents of change at the beginning, this group may be critical to the success of the new system. The condition we are speaking of may be most noticeable in situations where numerous innovations are underway simultaneously. The failure may be manifest in an expression of overload, or symptoms akin to burn-out. Regardless of the reason, one possible result is that the leader's future proposals will be rejected by this group of staff. For this reason it is imperative that all managers be aware of the dangers in extensive or very rapid innovation,

While we are in a small library, it seems that our staff has fallen into this pattern regarding innovation. More people expressed neutral feelings at the beginning than either favored or opposed changes. Opposition to the old management style was not automatically transferred as a positive response to the new leadership, either in institutional or personal terms. Over time, however, it is also clear that as leaders we are responsible for the operational adjustments that will lead us as a library into the future. Failure in this can be fatal, both in institutional and career terms.

IV. SLACK RESOURCES

There is in the management literature a theory that there exist time, equipment, and personnel which are available in periods of stress. They may be utilized to bridge the gap between past activities and future needs. Slack resources, as these are known, can make the difference between success and failure in the implementation of change.

If such a situation exists in your library, you should, and probably do, feel extremely lucky. Most of us work under severe limitations. We have discovered that without such conditions (free computer time, under-utilized staff, etc.) it is necessary to revise plans and delay change. Part of our responsibility as managers is convincing the staff that they can and should eliminate part of their jobs in order to take up new duties or change procedures. This requires both conviction by the administrator that things can work differently and the staff's belief, that the options presented are both valid and appropriate methods by which to bring about changes.

One thing we have attempted to do is to "create" slack resources through change itself. The automation of processing tasks eliminates the need to perform other time-consuming chores. By moving to an interim automated Acquisitions system, for instance, staff members have acquired a new set of computer skills, while eliminating the onerous and time-consuming tasks associated with manual order filing. As a result, the staff now have better control over their work, and are also able to perform other duties. If staff members feel tied to their traditions and routines, though, they will be unwilling to take on new technology, reorganized structures, or other innovations. The library and its managers must devote time, physical resources and personnel to the process of change, in order to make the transformation work.

V. POWER

Power is a more delicate matter than we had expected. Staff members assume that their former colleagues will act in similar ways when they become bosses. This is not always either proper or appropriate, and it is a difficult lesson for both new leaders and their co-workers to learn. It is harder yet to change one's personality. After many years of learning conciliation, for

example, the exercise of authority can be extremely traumatic. In addition, the management literature (and seminars by the dozen) seem to be going counter to our own needs as leaders. Businessmen are being taught precisely the humanistic traits we need to forget, and are un-learning techniques we frequently wish we had and sometimes regret not having. The world in this respect is simple, if not always useful to us on the job.

Managers of all types should recognize that power must be carefully used at the beginning of the new administration. Demonstrations of authority may alienate segments of the staff whose help will be needed to set the new direction. On the other hand, power delayed may be perceived as a lack of the authority to use it, or a lack of strength. Leaders must have a sense of how and when to employ the power at their command, and the effects it will have on both the staff and the work that is to be done.

At the California Library Association Conference in November, 1987, Sharon Hogan stated that as middle managers we have little real power. Our primary job is to transmit information and to

direct resources. While we have been given status, power does not necessarily come with it. Our role therefore is to persuade, to cajole, and to encourage staff members to move in the directions we wish.

VI. STRESS

Given the general under-staffing of libraries, stress should be considered a natural state of affairs. The addition of new tasks, and the mutation of familiar regimens to new and more complex sets of functions, will dramatically widen many librarians' view of their jobs. At the same time, it places surprisingly heavy burdens on them.

Managers cannot ignore stress resulting from change as a factor in the productivity and morale of the organization. People who feel that they have been misused, or not listened to, threaten the stability of the library and can oppose its new directions. No matter how well managers think they understand this, they must take care to instill positive attitudes and respond to stress in productive ways.

In organizations that are under pressure to change, the speed can be as stressful as innovation itself. In their first evaluations of conditions, managers should account for stress, and slow the process appropriately to allow for all staff to join and become comfortable in the newly developing situation. Also, as the library changes, managers must adjust the pace to allow for integration and evaluation of each new process, and to merge successive changes in a coordinated manner. When people have breathing space, and can see what they have done, they will feel better about themselves, and become more able to take on new challenges. In our situation slowing the process has improved the library's working environment significantly.

Charles Bunge's article last September in the Library Journal indicated many types of stress and noted that some sources of tension can also be times of great pleasure and satisfaction for us on the job. In our roles as leaders we need to recognize this among our colleagues and learn how to deal with the negative patterns as they arise.

One way to relieve some aspects of stress is to make meaningful changes at the margins of working life. At the Orradre Library we have purchased a new full-sized refrigerator and a microwave, the old, dingy staff room curtains have been removed, and some areas have been repainted. While this does not solve any difficulties directly, it offers concrete evidence for everybody that the quality of working life is an important administrative concern.

VII. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE.

All new leaders need to understand the history and circumstances of the positions they take on. In our case, for instance, we are the first people to hold these jobs. Our experience as long-time employees suggests that all incoming managers should know the length of service of their predecessors: libraries with short-term managers or new internal structures have different needs than those with extended periods under a single incumbent.

New leaders need to be aware of the "organizational culture" in their libraries. Who has the unofficial power? Which way does the grapevine grow? Who were the official and unofficial "stars" under the prior managers? These are not merely good political moves, they are vital to the establishment and maintenance of control and the implementation of needed innovation.

Middle managers cannot establish their teams. They must work with the people already in place, convince them of the needs for change, and build their confidence as they make changes. The new manager should find out how the "real" organization runs, before enacting sweeping innovation. One possible way to do this is by an evaluation of the skills of staff members, relating the results to planning for future directions. The physical resources (telephones, office space, typewriters) as well as staffing patterns require analysis, and need to be assessed as part of the evaluation of the library's culture, and related back to the vision being proposed. The vision, while it may not be altered, must be relevant to the people and other capacities of the library, and to the existing circumstances wherever possible. If it is overly ambitious, or if it significantly under-estimates the abilities and capacities of staff to perform, the possibility of success will diminish. To the extent the library is a working culture, the environment is a part of the new Manager's responsibility.

External as well as internal elements must also be evaluated by managers. The ligrary's historic ties with other agencies of the University, company, or community must be assessed. The prior leadership must be accounted for, as well as the skills it showed or lacked in all appropriate areas. Entry into the true power structure, or a change in position is one way to achieve visibility and to be sure the library's needs are recognized in the broader cultural environment.

VII. TRUST AND COMMUNICATION

In order for the library to succeed under its new leaders, the managers and staff must trust each other. We define Trust as "acceptance that the justification given for a specific action makes good sense". Without this, the best result a manager can expect of innovation may be that it may be accepted only in its outward form. New tasks will be performed, and new methods employed, but the new ideas they embody will be disregarded. Worse, and possibly more likely, change may be rejected because one party has been perceived by the other as breaking the rules. These include the prior unofficial power structures,

institutional traditions, and the vision as it was originally proposed or as accepted by the organization. Such a situation can easily lead to additional stress, resistance, and internal confusion.

In addition, other barriers to trust are part of the fabric of our organizations. They may exist most strongly between the professional librarians and the non-professional staff, between departments or other administrative units, or between organizational levels (managers against supervisors, etc.) Any or all of these conflicts may conspire to inhibit or destroy our best efforts to inspire our staffs, to encourage change, and work together toward the future.

In order for trust to grow and for the library to become able to change, the leader needs to take time and use patience. Time is required to convince the staff of the manager's understanding and caring. It is important to know when to step back, to wait for weeks or even months until people are comfortable or even accepting of new elements in their lives. Confidence in the rightness of the vision and its benefits can

only carry people part of the way. Trust comes from the leader's awareness that people need to adjust, and from staff members' awareness that time has been spent and adjustments made on their behalf.

It has been said many times that "Communication is a two-way process". In what we have said in the previous sections, we have attempted to provide some concepts that may help integrate managers into new situations. It is our firm belief that sharing the vision and generating trust among the library staff are important ways to develop true Communication. Conversely, only serious and continuing communication will establish trust.

In order for this to be completely successful, however, Managers must recognize that people communicate in different ways. Some are vocal, others do better in written form. Still another group will provide attitudinal keys, such as resistance to change and high stress levels. New managers need to be aware of all of these methods, and respond effectively to each of them. There is a tendency to minimize certain types of response or not to recognize them at all. This has serious costs, in pushing away staff involvement and in delaying future changes.

On the other side, managers need to make as much - and as productive - contact with the staff as possible (what the family therapists call quantity and quality time). Without this, communication must be seen as a desirable but unattainable goal.

Staff who see their leaders infrequently may feel that the managers have closed their doors and will not listen, while the leaders may believe that an open-door policy <u>is</u> in effect. If they feel that their administrators are not responsive, though, workers will not avail themselves of the opportunities. In the same way, when interactions appear to be planned rather than spontaneous, or the leaders seem preoccupied or uninterested in the staff, the managers will be considered uncaring and distant, and results will not be positive. While frequent interactions between staff and managers may not solve all of the difficulties, lack of it will assuredly lead to problems over time, if not immediately.

IX. CONCLUSION: TEAM BUILDING

We have left this concept for last because we believe it is the result toward which good and successful management should lead. The vision, once it has been accepted, allows staff members to act assertively in adopting new programs and solving problems. Stress will not be eliminated. The awareness that others have taken new responsibilities will make all workers aware that the burdens have been spread throughout the group, rather than laid on their backs as individuals.

Team Building demands trust among library staff, and between them and the people who lead them. By gaining mutual respect, people will take risks, expand their roles, and interact. The result ideally should be an integrated system, in which information as well as work passes openly and easily through the organization. As agents of this opening process, Middle Managers need to be sensitive to the needs of their staff, and communicate those up the ladder. On the other hand, they need to present clear and reasonable plans to get the job done. Only a group working in harmony can provide this strength, and only the best leaders can generate the cooperative spirit and the organizational ability to make it work.

As middle managers, we are sometimes seen as ineffective, or as bureaucrats, carrying out the orders of our superiors. To the extent that we are unable to create our own plans, but must follow the vision that has been set, this is correct. Team-building, though, is a long-term process that cannot be dictated or mandated. As the library's Leaders, we must generate the commitment our staff will need to carry out their tasks, leading ultimately to the successful adoption of change. Our success or failure is in part our own, but must also relate to our situations.

Our role as middle managers is to transmit the library's new vision. We have been asked to develop a climate for change and innovative thinking and working. We must use our resources efficiently, to manage stress and divert resistance back into re-orientation and creative rather than destructive paths. We should know the value of power, and the alternative uses that persuasion can be put to, and what part each of them has in management situations. Our goal is to develop a trusting atmosphere in which people can feel that they and their work are appreciated and are part of a team with a common goal.

In short, we are catalysts. We generate others toward the future. Our responsibility is to facilitate the development of the team. In order to do this, however, we must gain a full comprehension of the vision, gain acceptance and trust from our staff, and communicate the needs and values throughout the system. To quote Warren Bennis, "Management is getting things done right. Leadership is getting the right things done." As new Middle Managers we must work with the people in our organizations, provide them with goals and equipment, and assist them to accomplish the work as best we can. The concepts we have provided are familiar, but the perspective we bring has not often been heard. We believe, though, that they need to be repeated, as they remain useful for us all in operating our libraries.

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